

Message Text

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ACTION DHA-02

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 AID-05 EB-07 AGR-05 TRSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 792

INFO AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 2093

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM PINS PINT EAID GT

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS IN GUATEMALA - 1976

REF: STATE 045319

1. FOLLOWING IS TELEGRAPHIC SUMMARY OF HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTING AIRGRAM WHICH WILL BE POUCHED MARCH 16. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE GOG IS NOT ENGAGED IN A "CONSISTENT PATTERN OF GROSS VIOLATIONS" OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

2. LEGAL GUARANTEES - CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES REMAIN AS DISCUSSED IN 1975 A-026. AT PRESENT TIME "STATE OF PUBLIC CALAMITY," WHICH IS AUTHORIZED UNDER THE CONSTITUTION, EXISTS IN GUATEMALA, BUT CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES HAVE NOT BEEN RESTRICTED.

3. GOG PRACTICE - IN GUATEMALA HUMAN RIGHTS IS A FUNCTION OF THE OVERALL INTERNAL SECURITY SITUATION. POLICIES IMPLEMENTED BY
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PRESIDENT LAUGERUD PRODUCED A SHARP DECLINE IN THE LEVEL OF

POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN 1975. INCIDENTS OF POSSIBLE POLITICAL VIOLENCE DROPPED TO AN AVERAGE OF 21 PER MONTH, AS COMPARED WITH AN AVERAGE OF 57 PER MONTH DURING THE LAST YEAR OF THE ARANA PRESIDENCY. MUCH OF THE VIOLENCE THAT OCCURRED WAS LOCALIZED AND NOT ATTRIBUTABLE TO HIGH GOG OFFICIALS.

4. THE GOG'S RECORD IS NOT AN UNBLEMISHED ONE, HOWEVER. WE BELIEVE THAT ARMY TROOPS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE JULY 1975 DISAPPEARANCE OF NINE CAMPESINOS IN NORTHERN HUEHUETENANGO DEPARTMENT AND THAT THE GOG HAS CONDONED BY INACTION THE JANUARY 1976 KILLING OF 4 CAMPESINOS IN ALTA VERAPAZ DEPARTMENT. THE OFFICIALLY "UNSOLVED" KILLINGS IN GUATEMALA CITY OF A QUICHE DEPARTMENT SCHOOLTEACHER AND OF ONE OF FORMER GUATEMALA CITY MAYOR MANUEL COLOM'S KEY SUPPORTERS GIVE US SERIOUS CONCERN. IN THE MIDST OF THE DEVASTATION AND DISORGANIZATION CREATED BY THE FEBRUARY 4 EARTHQUAKE, SOME SUSPECTED LOOTERS WERE KILLED BY NEIGHBORHOOD VIGILANTE GROUPS AND OTHERS MAY HAVE BEEN SUMMARILY EXECUTED BY POLICE.

5. OFFICIAL ATTITUDES - THE GUATEMALAN PRESIDENT'S ATTITUDE TOWARD POLITICAL VIOLENCE (AND HENCE TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS) GOVERNS NATIONAL PRACTICE. LAUGERUD HAS BEEN MUCH LESS WILLING TO USE EXTRA-LEGAL VIOLENCE THAN HIS PREDECESSOR, BUT HE IS NOT UNWILLING TO ACT SUMMARILY AGAINST PERSONS OR GROUPS HE BELIEVES ENGAGED IN EXTREMIST POLITICAL ACTIVITY. THE GUATEMALAN CONGRESS AND JUDICIARY LACK THE INDEPENDENCE AND TRADITION TO OPPOSE HIM.

6. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS - NO REPORTS OR FINDINGS BY INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE DURING THE LAUGERUD ADMINISTRATION. GUATEMALA WAS VISITED BY REPRESENTATIVE OF NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN JANUARY 1976 TO DISCUSS THE ARMY'S JULY 1975 SWEEP THROUGH HUEHUETENANGO. HE TOLD EMOFFS THAT IF SATISFACTORY REPLIES WERE NOT FORTHCOMING FROM THE GOG, HE PLANNED TO RAISE MATTER WITH IAHRC.

7. EMBASSY ACTIONS - EMOFFS HAVE RAISED THE MATTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS WITH BOTH GOG OFFICIALS AND POLITICAL LEADERS, AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO.

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